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## kneeling on sharpened floors

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Bob Mulligan

## kneeling on sharpened floors

lesson plans, if any actually existed, were aborted  
so, too, the discussion of Vesuvius' volcanic ash in 79 A.D.  
encrusting Romans like chrysalis mid-thought  
as the cold shrill sirens of a tepid war  
breached the universal routine  
forcing the abandonment of mind-dulling patterns  
increasing heart rates in a soldierly dash  
to the cloak room for a shroud:  
the fabric of protection  
smelling of home and the love of our mother

kneeling on sharpened floors  
we shared touching intimacy with terrazzo  
buffed to an exquisitely fine edge

resembling the pipes of a pressure fed organ  
mechanically aligned in scaling rows  
we were tuned to the import of prayer  
keyed for the unlocking chant  
accompanied by a celestial backbeat  
clicking and clacking the beads of sorrowful mystery:  
the weapons of choice in a children's crusade  
against crimson, godless hordes

kneeling on sharpened floors  
wandering on inswept eyes  
this we prayed:

our Father who art in heaven  
hollow be thy name  
shall we be found here  
by a new millennium's progeny,

kneeling on sharpened floors

sharing in that same archeological wonderment  
lately abandoned in gray wainscoted classrooms?

most Pompeian's died  
in communion with their families  
we died lonely among strangers  
orphans to our God  
as we knelt on sharpened floors  
at the hour of our death  
amen

and i heard the Lord God speak

*Christ, where's the light!*  
and i heard the Lord God speak  
to no one in particular:

way to go, my boy,  
you found a path  
the nuns are as wrong  
as the Pope's last decree  
there's more than one way  
to do this right

I admire the way  
you hid in your bed  
discovering a world within  
squaring the darkness  
with eyes pinched shut  
reducing your vision  
to see further ahead  
finding it luminous  
at the edge of the void  
then mapping the liberating light



Mulligan

consider yourself lucky  
some children don't get there  
they fail, they flail,  
they fall beyond the pale  
but you, my boy, you found a way  
heaven's no more than that